

# HARLEM Friendship House NEWS



St. MARTIN  
DE PORRES

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THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT  
THE TRUTH

It all started at lunch. In fact it was Flewey, our librarian and artist, who threw the bombshell in our midst by remarking that she disagreed with the way we were presenting Harlem, Friendship House, the Staff Workers' life and vocation, both from the lecture platform and in print.

She pointed out in a long speech that it was biased, sentimental dramatized, exaggerated, and that she for one was getting tired of it. Everyone began talking at once---and we sat and listened, and decided then and there to write an article on the discussion of it. We decided to write a completely frank article presenting both points of view, and leave to you, our friends, the final decision as to which presentation is best fitted to make our readers realize the highlights of Harlem's plight, Friendship House work, and the Staff Workers' life and vocation --- So here goes---

Harlem which comprises over 55 city blocks and houses 460,000 people consisting of Negroes, Porto-Ricans, and some few whites is a large community. It has its wealth members, its artists, its musicians, and some business men. It has its intellectuals, writers, some of whom are wealthy; others just well off, and still others who are poor.

It has its middle class, and its professional people. It has pleasant, comfortable, even luxurious apartments and houses. It has its respectable lower class that fights gallantly against all the odds that the community is known to have, and which keeps its homes clean and tries to bring its children up well and decently.

It has schools, churches, Social Work Centres, Recreational facilities and libraries. But all of these are rather inadequate for a population of 460,000.

However, the majority of Harlem is poor, poor below the most vivid imagination of anyone who has not lived here. It is so overcrowded that sardines have more room in their cans than the average Negro has in his apartment. Crime of all sorts and rackets flourish tragically. Juvenile delinquency is the highest in NYC. Housing is the despair of all Federal and State agencies, not mentioning Social Workers and Nurses. Sickness, especially TB are prevalent. Insanity is high and no wonder, when one thinks of a community who not only has to battle against all the economic odds of a depressed area, but has to face Jim Crowism and discrimination in employment and in every walk of life.

It is with the poor and the tired and the unemployed or those living on that strange margin---that are called "JUST EXISTING", that Friendship House deals-----

READER, WILL YOU LET US KNOW IF YOU WANT US TO WRITE ABOUT THE SUBMERGED NEGRO WHO NEEDS YOUR ASSISTANCE AND OUR WORK, OR DO YOU WANT US TO WRITE ABOUT THE GREAT AND THE INTELLECTUALS AMONG THE RACE, OR DO YOU WANT BOTH SIDES----

Friendship House work is simple. Its aim and goal is INTERRACIAL JUSTICE---OR THE APPLICATION OF



THE DICTRINE OF THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST WITHOUT ANY COMPROMISES TO THE NEGRO. It practices the spiritual and the corporal works of mercy only as an end to this goal. It does so thru the Medium of a Settlement House program.

When we either write or speak of F.H. and its work, we frankly acknowledge that we dramatize them instead of presenting our facts dryly and statistically. But, nevertheless, these facts are the truth. We present to you, our friends and readers, specific cases, outstanding ones to give you a general idea of the whole or collective work we are doing.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU OBJECT TO THIS TECHNIQUE OF OURS. AND IF YOU PREFER US TO BE CORRECT AND DRY TO THE LAST DETAIL OF A GIVEN CASE.

The Staff Workers of FH are men and women who have seen the ideal of St. Francis of Assisi and caught a glimpse of Christ in the Negro. These people come from all parts of the USA to join us and work with us Harlem. They live in rooms or a little flat we call Madonna Flat, and are in charge of all our various departments.

When we write or speak of our common life, we agree that perhaps, we stress too much the dark side of it. Let us review it briefly.

Staff Workers LIVE in Harlem. For those who are white, it is at first a hard experience and a novel one. Harlem IS noisy and over-crowded and the flat lacks privacy. Bed-bugs appear personally...so do mice and rats. All these are facts. We do spend fifty cents a day on two meals for about seven to nine or more people. True, we have donations and that does not include canned goods, nor some bulk which we

buy. Nevertheless, at no time can that amount be called luxurious.

The Staff Workers work hard. The work and being with the public is hard on everyone. Moreover the constant poverty and misery and problems one has to deal with all day pull one down physically, at last.

Flewey wants to point out that we eat good simple wholesome food; that Madonna Flat, our own apartment, and the extra rooms rented for the overflow of the workers, are cozy and clean.--- We all have half-days and Sunday off; our health is taken care of; we are often given additional education, and we get more than we give. No one disputes this. Yet, there seems to be a feeling that we exaggerate and dramatize our poverty to get your sympathy---

WHAT ARE YOUR REACTIONS-----OURS ARE SPEAKING PERSONALLY--THAT IT IS NOT SO. WHEN I SEE ALL THESE AMERICAN GIRLS, WOMEN, AND MEN, FROM GOOD HOMES WITH GOOD EDUCATION COME HERE AND SHARE HARLEM AND ALL IT IMPLIES, ON THE SAME STANDARD AS THE NEGRO, OR ALMOST THE SAME (THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT OUR MANY FRIENDS GIVE US HOLIDAY OUTLETS AND NEEDED GIFTS WHICH THE NEGRO CAN'T GET) AND WHEN I THINK OF THE HARD CONSTANT WORK THEY DO--I KNOW WE COULD NEVER DRAMATIZE OR EXAGGERATE IT IN OUR ARTICLES OR LETTERS.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

DEAR FRIENDS-----

#### STAFF REPORTER

Last month we wrote you a letter and joyfully announced that we were going to the printers, and that the February issue of the Friendship House News would be a real newspaper. Our column this month is in the nature of a retraction of that statement --- and an apology.

The nearest that we got to the printers was to call him up and tell him that we couldn't make it this month because we had the Grippe. We apologized hoarsely (we had Laryngitis, too) and promised to go to press, without fail, the first of March.

We are very sorry that we had to disappoint you this time, but the situation was more than we could cope with in our germ-ridden state. The Grippe virus visited each Staff Worker in turn, and Madonna Flat took on the semblance of an infirmary. Instead of having our fingers stained with printers' ink, as we expected to in February, our chest was burned by a mustard plaster that the Baroness made for us. But we must confess that we prefer the ink.

However, our sorry plight was relieved by the mail that we received. We asked you last month to write and give us suggestions about what you would like to read in our paper, and we received many letters apropos of that. The letters were good and the suggestions were most helpful. We'd like more letters. We will welcome your manuscripts. We don't mind criticisms. If any of our articles or the manner in which they are presented please or displease you---don't hesitate to tell us. It's your paper--written for your consumption, enjoyment, and information, and we'll gladly write what you want to read.

Preparedness for any eventuality is one of the Baroness' chief virtues. While we were ill, we heard that there was much feverish activity going on in the library, and as soon as we felt better, we scurried across the street to see what had happen.

We all believe (even though we would prefer not to), that one of the harbingers of Spring this year will be a token bombing of New York. FH, under the competent direction of the Baroness, who has been through blackouts and air raids in London, is making ready for it.

Our library will be used as a shelter. The blackout curtains have already gone up and they are a perpetual and somber reminder of what might come. The large plate glass window in the library has tons of scotch tape pasted on it in a neat criss-crossed design. It looks pretty and we hear that it is practical and that it stops glass from shattering.

The back part of the library will be used for canteen service and will be equipped with coffee urns and hardtack for hungry Air Raid Wardens. The coffee urn comes to us through the courtesy of the U.S. Government. We'll have cots for casualties--and First Aid Kits. Most of the Staff Workers are attending classes in First Aid, and three of us are Air Raid Wardens for the buildings housing our clubs. The Baroness has been appointed Building Director.

Thus FH has embarked on two additional major enterprises---printing a paper and making an Air Raid Shelter. For the first we ask your letters and your suggestions, and for the last, we ask your prayers---that our Shelter and our cots for bombing casualties may never have to be used.



## BROTHERS IN CHRIST

One day the disciples asked our Lord how to pray. He said to them, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father Who Art in Heaven'."-----  
When the Church prays today, she prays just as Our Lord instructed her. When she first offers bread in the Mass, she has the priest speak to God as "O Holy Father". Again, just before the Consecration, the priest speaks to God as "Most Merciful Father". After the Consecration and before Communion the priest says, "Our Father, Who Art in Heaven"-----

Our Lord, through His Church, is teaching us that God is The Father. Indeed, because His Only Begotten Son is our Brother God is now our Father and He has adopted us as His children. Now, if God is Our Father, and Christ Our Brother, then we are brothers and sisters of one another, and the coming of our Lord was to bring His brothers and sisters back to His Father.

Do you remember when Our Lord showed himself to the brothers and sisters he came to bring back to His Father? First, He showed Himself to the Jews. Then, on Epiphany, He showed Himself to the gentiles. The three wise men who came to see Him on Epiphany, were from the East and one of them was a Negro. You see how carefully Our Lord planned His appearance so that we would know that Negroes and Jews and gentiles are all His brothers.

During the season of Lent, we reflect often on our Lord's Passion. He suffered all for love--love for His Eternal Father... Love of God is called Charity--- In the masses through the Epiphany season, the Church teaches us the importance of Charity---- St. John, the Evangelist, once wrote: "If anyone say, 'I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not

love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God Whom he has not seen". Moreover, we have this command from Him - that he who loves God must love his brother also.

Our Lord came to bring back to His Father all His Brothers ---- Gentile, Negro, White, and Jew. The Church tells us these things over and over again in the Mass, so that we will retain them in our minds and hearts and practice them in our lives----

PHIL KAUFMAN

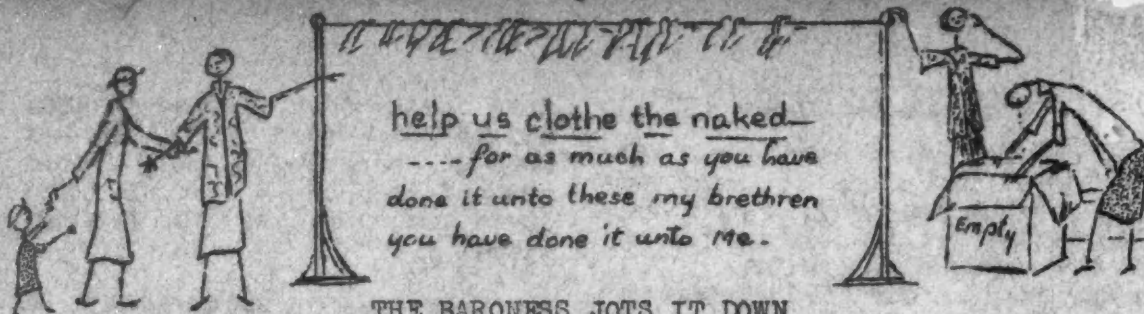
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## OUR LADY OF AFRICA

On a promontory north of the harbor,  
Notre Dame d'Afrique calls down to the water,  
Welcoming to Algiers the Wandering strangers  
Seeking for solace.  
High above the Moorish minarets gaudy,  
Sainted hands have built a beautiful temple,  
Named for Our Lady.  
Here we knelt before the Ebony Virgin,  
Black as the desert suns can darken the features,  
Calling to mind the tale of beautiful Sheba,  
Beauteous Arab.  
Wandering down to town past blossoming citrons.  
Hopes, long dead, arose for thinking our Lady,  
She who loves her humble African children  
Will not forget us!

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### THE BARONESS JOTS IT DOWN

Definitely, something strange is happening in Heaven. I mean to say our lines of communication with it, for neither does St. Anthony answer our frantic calls, nor can we make connection with St. Vianny, the only canonized diocesan priest up there-----

Could it be the war? Has some stray bullet or cannon-ball played havoc with the power lines between Heaven and Earth? We at Friendship House keep wondering --- and worrying a bit.

The matter at hand is urgent - very urgent. The Friendship House Clothing Centre which is under the joint patronage of St. Anthony and the Cure D'Ars looks positively desolate. NO OTHER WORD WILL FIT IT.

The hangers are empty, and if there is a more desolate sight than empty hangers in a place like ours, we should like to see it. They seem limp and discouraged, hanging on the long steel rod that is their home. Maybe they feel just as unhappy and uncomfortable as we do. All week, tired women and little children come - in dire need of clothing of all kinds---layettes, under-clothing, children's, girls', men, and women's clothing. We haven't the heart to speak. We just point to the row of empty hangers. At times it seems to us that the hangers are shrinking and blushing under that pointing of ours.

Now, maybe, dear friends, YOU would like to be the repairman who will restore our Heavenly Power Line. All you need to do is to ship, mail, express or bring clothing to us. All kinds, all sizes for young and old. Remnants of material and wool are welcome, not to mention religious pictures, Catholic magazines and rosaries. The rosaries, we share with the Negro soldier at the Harlem USO.

WE REALIZE THAT THERE ARE MANY CALLS ON YOU THESE DAYS FOR ALL THESE ARTICLES AND WE KNOW THAT EACH OF THEM IS URGENT AND VITAL, BUT PLEASE REMEMBER---HARLEM, THE FORGOTTEN---THE NEED HERE IS SO GREAT---AND IT IS AMERICA'S NEED, TOO!!!

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